

Vashon Island/Downtown Seattle • West Seattle/Downtown Seattle

King County Water Taxi News



The moorage and maintenance barge.

Maintenance barge and *Spirit of Kingston* are in service

After being busy this spring receiving our moorage and maintenance barge and getting our recently acquired *Spirit of Kingston* ready to run, the King County Water Taxi is going full speed into the summer.

You've probably noticed the moorage and maintenance barge at Pier 48. We use it for overnight moorage of up to three vessels, and it's the daily home of the *Rachel Marie*, which will serve as the back-up vessel for both routes until her lease expires at year end.

The 40-by-140-foot steel-hull barge has a covered workshop, crew support spaces and storage facilities. Our engineering team uses it for preventive and corrective maintenance of the Water Taxi fleet, and are finding it a welcome improvement from the container box at Pier 50.



The Spirit of Kingston.

We are also excited to have the *Spirit* of *Kingston* as our primary vessel for the West Seattle route. Acquired by the King County Ferry District through

a "no capital cost" arrangement with the Federal Transit Administration, the *Spirit of Kingston* is an 8-year-old, 65-foot catamaran that formerly sailed in Alaska and most recently was used for the Kingston-downtown Seattle service. The *Spirit of Kingston* has capacity for 147 passengers and a crew of three, and we recently added a bike rack that holds 16 bicycles.

The interior features a combination of theater-style seating, bench seats with tables, and facing seats on the first and second decks. The vessel also offers ample outdoor deck space for viewing the sights of Elliott Bay. Outdoor seating is available on the rear of the upper deck,

and passengers are also allowed on the portside exterior deck and on the bow while the vessel is underway.

The *Spirit of Kingston* has three restrooms on the rear of the first deck—one inside and two on the exterior deck.

With four 740-horsepower propulsion engines that can maintain a cruising speed of 24 knots, the vessel can cross between West Seattle and downtown Seattle in less than 10 minutes.

Reminder: bikes must be walked on the pier

Water Taxi customers and crew members have told us that cyclists riding down the pier have become an increasing concern. Cyclists, please walk your bikes on the pier when you



enter and exit. The pier is not a roadway and we require that bicycles be walked for the comfort and safety of all passengers.

Saying goodbye

Crew member Paul Clendenen left us at the end of June to pursue a new career challenge.



Paul Clendenen

Paul started with us four years ago as an on-call crew member and progressively moved up to a career service crew position on the West Seattle route. Paul had great deck handing skills and was a skilled relief captain. With his friendly demeanor and great customer service, he was very well

liked by the crew and riders.

Although he has left us for a new opportunity, Paul has committed to filling in on occasion to cover vacancies and ease the sadness of his departure, if only just a bit.

Ridership is up on both routes

Ridership for the first half of 2013 is exceeding that for the same period in 2012 on both the West Seattle and Vashon routes.

For the West Seattle route, this is thanks to the highest June rider count in the 15-year history of the route. The total 36,076 riders recorded for June 2013 was more than 35 percent above that in June last year.

The Vashon route continued to show monthly growth over the previous year for the ninth straight month.

See ridership table on reverse.

continued

Total Ridership



| VASHON | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-------|--|--|--|
| Month | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | % | | | |
| Jan | 8,813 | 11,081 | 13,810 | 12,820 | 16,397 | 27.9% | | | |
| Feb | 8,184 | 10,847 | 11,996 | 14,130 | 14,263 | 0.9% | | | |
| Mar | 9,459 | 13,448 | 15,083 | 15,330 | 15,654 | 2.1% | | | |
| Apr | 9,359 | 12,603 | 13,414 | 14,835 | 16,526 | 11.4% | | | |
| May | 8,338 | 12,003 | 14,087 | 15,604 | 16,735 | 7.2% | | | |
| Jun | 9,006 | 13,963 | 14,487 | 14,989 | 15,199 | 1.4% | | | |
| Jul | 9,469 | 13,276 | 13,887 | 15,150 | | | | | |
| Aug | 8,661 | 14,569 | 15,681 | 16,392 | | | | | |
| Sep | 8,826 | 13,923 | 14,082 | 13,992 | | | | | |
| Oct | 11,005 | 14,415 | 15,170 | 17,642 | | | | | |
| Nov | 9,756 | 12,182 | 13,517 | 14,572 | | | | | |
| Dec | 10,098 | 11,310 | 12,405 | 12,514 | | | | | |
| Total | 110,974 | 153,620 | 167,619 | 177,970 | 94,774 | | | | |

| WEST SEATTLE | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--|--|--|--|
| Month | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | % | | | | |
| Jan | 0 | 0 | 2,733 | 8,037 | 8,067 | 0.4% | | | | |
| Feb | 0 | 0 | 2,569 | 8,837 | 7,188 | -18.7% | | | | |
| Mar | 0 | 0 | 2,745 | 9,371 | 8,666 | -7.5% | | | | |
| Apr | 20,361 | 13,068 | 10,335 | 18,468 | 15,894 | -13.9% | | | | |
| May | 31,557 | 17,389 | 17,367 | 26,454 | 26,129 | -1.2% | | | | |
| Jun | 33,864 | 22,093 | 28,202 | 26,633 | 36,076 | 35.5% | | | | |
| Jul | 46,961 | 37,041 | 38,417 | 41,716 | | | | | | |
| Aug | 43,979 | 32,169 | 41,157 | 44,225 | | | | | | |
| Sep | 26,602 | 16,946 | 28,912 | 31,775 | | | | | | |
| Oct | 12,872 | 10,318 | 25,270 | 20,530 | | | | | | |
| Nov | 0 | 2,578 | 9,734 | 7,967 | | | | | | |
| Dec | 0 | 2,418 | 8,714 | 6,304 | | | | | | |
| Total | 216,196 | 154,020 | 216,155 | 250,317 | 102,020 | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

= WSF service = Argosy service

Leslie Brown is the former editor of the Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber and now works for the King County Department of Public Defense. She also happens to be a new Water Taxi commuter from Vashon. In the June 23 issue of the Beachcomber, Leslie wrote the following commentary on being a commuter:

Car-free commute shows society at its best

By Leslie Brown

The other night, as I was sitting on the water taxi on my way home to Vashon, I struck up a conversation with a couple from Cambridge, England, who appeared to be headed to the island for a visit. As it turned out, they didn't plan to set foot on Vashon. They were simply taking a sunset cruise on the water taxi. A ride on the King County-owned catamaran, they noted, was as lovely as a cruise on one of those big, tourist-filled commercial boats and a lot less expensive.

Now that I'm no longer employed on the island, this is my life: Commuting every day via a boat some ride for the sheer pleasure of it. In the weeks after I left the Beachcomber, people would often ask me how my commute was, sometimes in a sympathetic, almost rueful tone. The answer: The commute is really quite lovely, and I'm often torn by my choices: Do I read a book, talk to a fellow commuter or simply stare out the window at the glassy blue water and the forested flanks of Blake Island?

Granted, this commute is still new. At some point, it will become mind-numbingly familiar. I'll arrive to the dock in the dark, shivering in the rain, not drinking in the morning sun. Even so, even though I know it won't always feel so sweet, I'm struck by how lucky we are on Vashon to have a water taxi that whisks us across Puget Sound to downtown Seattle, a water taxi that is served by a public bus that drops us off minutes before the boat's departure or picks us up at the end of the day. I rarely drive anymore. My daily routine involves buses, boats and my own two feet.

This boat, and these buses, are of course supported by tax dollars. Indeed, I see my commute as government at its best. The boat is nearly always full. While the cost of a ticket is not inconsequential—\$5 per trip—it's certainly affordable (and heavily subsidized by many employers who realize the benefits of encouraging their employees to leave their cars behind). And

get this: The bus that picks me up at the corner of Bank and Vashon Highway is almost always on time, as is the water taxi it delivers me to. The crew on the boat is warm and friendly. And unlike the former Vashon water taxi that sank off the coast of Zanzibar, a boat that was overloaded and employed on a route for which it was ill-equipped, this journey feels utterly safe.

Blasting government is a sport these days. And for sure, government isn't perfect. The other reality of my commute is the one I face as I walk each morning through City Hall Park, living quarters for a small but constant collection of homeless people who sit on the benches with their bags and blankets. Often, a woman who looks racked by drugs asks me for a penny. Once, more poignantly, I heard her say to someone eating a sandwich, "You gonna finish that?" Despite our best efforts, the epidemic of drugs and the pain of untreated mental illness are a drama that plays out on our city streets every day, a reminder of our limits as a society.

Even so, my daily commute has given rise in me to a deeper appreciation for what it is that we can achieve when we work together, which, ultimately, is the definition of government. We, not them. Collective action, not finding our own way, separate and apart. And often, it's at the local level that we see our greatest successes: Libraries and schools, parks and sewer systems, land protection and water taxis that run on time.

What's more, these aren't just luxuries. These are amenities, for sure, but with benefits to society that are profound: cleaner air and water, wildlife habitat and playgrounds, public safety and roads that aren't so clogged. We all stand to gain from effective and efficient government. And the water taxi—well-run, much-used and serving a clear and immediate need—is a great example of government that works.

So my commute is good. In fact, I wrote this entire commentary while riding on the water taxi, though it took a while to finish it, as I found myself often wanting to chat with fellow commuters or stare out the window at Puget Sound. Who knows? One of these days I might spot a killer whale or a pod of porpoises as I make my way to work.

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